

GOD'S PROJECT AND ITS INCARNATION IN HISTORY

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The intellectual apostolate has been part of the Society's mission from the beginnings of the Order. It is configured by Ignatian spirituality, which has a very great affinity with the integration of faith and justice, so that Jesuit theology bears that stamp.

The Spiritual Exercises form the Jesuit to keep his eyes fixed both on God (faith) and on the incarnation in history (justice). The presence of God's Transcendence from the first sentence of the Principle and Foundation, the absolute precedence of the divine plan and the Trinitarian gaze on the world in the meditation on the Incarnation, the Lord's initiative in calling, in the meditation on the Kingdom, the sense of the absoluteness of God relativising, in profound indifference, health and sickness, riches and poverty, the final contemplation on the love of God in all things, make God's action principle and primary. On our part, no other attitude exists than faith which receives, accepts, recognises.

The theological eye seeks to uncover the initiative and the presence of God, in all that it sees, analyses, judges and proposes. It sharpens the perspective of faith. Nothing is interesting in theology which does not launch into the fundamental and ultimate experience of God. Theoretical, methodological procedures acquire importance to the extent that they help in understanding the greater design of God. Thus the Augustinian and Anselmian project of 'believing so as to understand', 'fides quarens intellectum', is realised.

The spirituality of the Exercises has another aspect, as important and necessary as the first. God's creative act leads to the human being's responsibility. The language used corresponds to an older theology: 'Man was created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and so to save his soul.' In today's terms, how is God praised, revered and served in a society where there is conflict, injustice, exploitation, if not by the struggle for justice? How do we save our own souls, without taking care of the order of justice dreamed of and longed for by God?

The dimension of commitment in Ignatian spirituality appears most clearly in the contemplation on the Incarnation, in the slow and continued meditation on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, in self-commitment with the Lord in poverty, in dedication to work for the Kingdom, in the third degree of humility. Fundamentally, spirituality keeps in play the dialectic between transcendence and immanence, between God's project and its incarnation in history. Liberation theology is nourished basically by this articulation, to the point where one of its leading figures, Gustavo Gutiérrez, has said that it is grounded in Ignatian spirituality

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Theological experience of the articulation between faith and justice is rooted in the interplay between the littleness of liberating practices, of historical mediations, and the infinity of God's presence in them. Faith not only motivates the practice of justice, but constitutes it. It offers the transcendental of that in which human categories of justice are the categorical. And in the ultimate analysis, it is the Incarnational model. As the divine in Jesus is manifested in the human, so faith comes about in the practice of justice. 'Only God himself can be human like this' (L. Boff) – it might be said that 'Only faith itself can be justice like this.'

Fidelity to the *sensus fidelium* and to the *magisterium* reproduces another fundamental tension in Jesuit theology. Translated into Latin American language, it means maintaining fidelity to the poor people and to the *magisterium*. In interpreting ecclesial base communities we forge the saying 'the Church which is born of the poor through the power of the

Spirit.' We see in the ecclesial base communities the manifestation of the Spirit's work. One of the signs was the presence in them of bishops, priests, pastoral workers and an immense popular base. They were not party cells or rebel groups but intensely ecclesial communities. The ecclesial quality showed itself by the primacy of the Word, by thirst for the Eucharist, by communion with the pastors, by bonding among the members. And within them the theologian felt himself living the double reality of fidelity to the sense of the faithful and to the magisterium. It was not a matter of an external, automatic, voluntarist alignment with the magisterium in blind following of its words. Its fidelity passed through the sieve of evangelical discernment, a thoroughly Jesuit experience. In the last resort, the criteria went back to St. Paul, who proposed the Paschal mystery as decisive. Liberation theology

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has a preference for this mystery, because it shows how the Lord's suffering and final humiliation end in life, in resurrection. There is no skipping over the moment of death, as in a certain superficial charismaticism, but also there is no lingering in death in a Manichaeian

theology of suffering. A suffering people lives in hope of the resurrection, anticipated by small liberations.

The option for the poor arises connaturally with our spirituality. Ignatius' deep perception of the positive value of poverty and suspicion of riches and vainglory awakens in Jesuit theology a sensitivity not only for poverty simply as a virtue, but for the poor. And they become masters for us; from them we learn poverty. Moreover, liberation theology works out a category of 'social place', which illuminates well the relationship between the option for the poor and intellectual, theological activity. 'Social place' means that theology strips itself of the interests, the bias of the observation and analysis of society proper to intellectuals of the system. They think of reality with the aim of maintaining, improving, affirming the interplay of relations of the dominant power. Liberation theology, for its part, seeks to perceive the same realities starting from other interests, from another angle: the poor.

Such a conversion of interests is not done in an abstract way, in offices or during a spiritual retreat. That would be little. Objectivity, consistency and perception would be lacking. It presupposes from the theologian a minimum of physical presence with the poor. Two models suggest themselves. One is more radical: a life of insertion, from which to do intellectual work. For many that was not possible because of academic demands and the kind of work produced. The more common model was that of intermittency. The theologian took on, in addition to strictly academic duties, physical presence at definite times with the poor, where he found inspiration, primary material for his thinking and a place to test out his theology. In this way the double pole of the academic seriousness typical of our theological output and a popular pastoral commitment that was inspiring and challenging was lived with a certain equilibrium

The Society of Jesus is preparing itself to confront the challenges of the 21st century. It will do this through various ministries. One of these is the intellectual/ theological ministry. The time of theology's solitary reign has passed. The Society has the resources to promote intensive interdisciplinary work to which theology makes its specific contribution. It has very great need of the contributions of the other sciences which proclaim the future world. Among these is biology, with its alarming advances in biotechnology, theories of communication and their impact on conscience, values and world culture. An economy highly bound up with the capitalist system needs to think of alternatives to provide consistency to the option for the poor. And it runs the risk of sliding into empty idealism and ending up more as an 'opium of the people' than as the incarnation of the Good News of Jesus.

In the field of theology itself, the Society possesses an enormous diversity of concepts, methods, output. How can we think about theological sharing over the whole Society, so that we can all enrich one other? We still look predominantly to the large European and North American centres for the formation of professors of theology in the Society. A contraflow towards Asia, towards the Third World in general, not only as a place of teaching, of offering, but also as a place of training, raising of problems, inter-theological dialogue, could be beneficial.